

Pennington Flash Circular Walk

The Pennington Flash area offers a variety of walks of different lengths. This booklet describes mainly a 5 mile walk based on the Flash but mentions some variations and extensions.

Pennington Flash is a 170-acre area created at the turn of the 20th century by coal mining subsidence, mainly from Bickershaw Colliery, and flooding. Now an extensive nature reserve with several bird hides and a network of tracks and footpaths, Pennington Flash Country Park is nationally renowned for its birdlife and is a classic example of natural regeneration.

Over 230 bird species have been recorded on site including: black-faced bunting, nightingale, marsh harrier, spoonbill and Leach's storm-petrel. Additionally, a wide variety of butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies can be spotted in the area.

The walk can start at various places, but here the chosen start point are the car parks at Leigh Sports Centre (Morrison/Holiday Express). Toilets at Morrisons. Alternatives include the Pennington car park or Green Lane



It is important to always be appropriately dressed for the conditions and carry, and know how to use, a suitable map for the walk.

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1: SJ649994 From wherever in the Sports Centre car parks, find the space between Morrisons and Holiday Inn. There is a footpath that leads around the back of Holiday inn and reaches a stream. (Alternately between the college and Holiday Inn also reaches the stream). Turn right on the stream and pass under the road bridge.



2: SJ647992 Coming from under the bridge immediately encounter a crossing path and you turn left over a small bridge. Follow this path for up to 300 yards (can be bit muddy). You are aiming for the Pennington main car park diagonally to the right. Either cut across the golf course or reach the road and turn right.



3: SJ645990 This is an alternate start point saving about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. Cross the car park and head right past snack and ice cream vans. There is an information centre and toilets at the end of the car park. Pass between an information board and the children's play area and then bear left at a path junction. This leads to Horrock's hide.



4: SJ642991 If not stopping at the hide, or after using it, continue past it to the right and after about 120 yards you meet a path and turn left. Follow the path for about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile past another hide until reaching a junction with other paths and steps up to the canal.

5: SJ640996 If you wish to visit other hides, turn right and follow the path back past more hides to return to the car park. Otherwise, climb up onto the canal towpath and turn left. Follow this for 150 yards passing an unusual stepped seat and note the view over the Flash. Look for the rough path down to the left.



6: SJ637995 Take the path down the slope and up the other side to an opening onto a path. Turn left and go down the slope 60 yards and turn right through an opening onto another path. Follow this path, either as it slopes up and goes left, or stay on the poorer path beside the water. Both reach a rough viewpoint area.



7: SJ637992 After the viewpoint, continue to follow beside the lake on the poorer path near the lake (the managed paths end up at the same place). Continue on past a warning about dangers of falling through ice. After about ½ mile from the view point is a path junction.



8: SJ630994 The better right path leads to a road (slag lane). The left path also leads to the road over a little stile but may be overgrown or muddy. On reaching the road turn left and look for another path leading off left.





9: SJ629994 There are a number of paths of varying quality leading off to the left after about 100 yards and a distance before the recycling centre on the right. Turn left on one that appears viable (one usually is). Follow the path for about 1/3rd mile past Mossley Hall farm and going up it's driveway through a gate to a road. (Byrom Lane)



10: SJ629988 There are three options here. Either turn left and follow the road for 340 yards around a corner and turn left down Green lane. (see note 19 below). Alternately the path is across the road – but is usually impassable. To continue the main route, turn right along the road 110 yards.



11: SJ628988 On the other side of the road is an entrance into both a footpath (left) and a “horses only” path. Again the footpath is usually unusable leaving no option but the bridleway. Follow this for about 160 yards looking for a stile on the right, and some optional routes.



12: SJ629987 The simplest way to continue is straight ahead leading to note 18 below. If you would like a refreshment stop, cross the stile (may now be a kissing gate) and head across the field and across a (possibly awkward) bridge into another field.

13: SJ627986 These two fields and adjacent ones are being modified as part of a new (19-6-16) dog training business. There are two picnic tables and the owner is happy for you to use these, or even the “coffee area” in a shed in the farm yard, with some refreshments (small payment).



14: SJ626985 The formal path is across the field in front of the barn. There is a stile leading into a field beyond the left of the barn. At the time of writing the path access was not quite sorted but should be soon. (there is another route through the farm, along the road and back by another path.)



15: SJ626985 Cross the stile and go ahead with a fence on the left. At the other side of the field is another stile, possibly in the middle of a stream! But easily crossed and leading onto a grassy path. After 35 yards look for a stile on the left.



16: SJ626984 Cross the stile into a large field with trees to the left and in the distance ahead a wide grassy avenue between trees. Aim for the avenue and once there move to the right hand treeline. There is an unclear path entrance in the right hand treeline.





17: SJ629983 Follow this tree lined path, ducking under a metal tube blocking the path – the top is all sticky – and reach the bridleway you left earlier and immediately opposite another path.



18: SJ630983 If at note 12 you continued along the bridleway, this is the path you look for. Leave the bridleway on this path and follow it to a road (Sandy Lane). (NOTE: There is another path 120 yards further on that leads across a field to the same road)



19: SJ632984 In good dry weather cross into another path, turn left at a crossing, cross a driveway to reach the Flash side after about ¼ mile, and turn right. (see note 21). In wet weather EITHER turn left along the road to Green Lane. (see note 10), OR turn right for about 200 yards (see note 25).



20: SJ632987 Green Lane is only used for a shorter route (note 10) or to avoid flooding (note 19). Go down the road past the cottages and onto a rougher road until it reaches some buildings with industrial machines. (Sorrowcow Farm)

21: SJ635987 Pass through the farm and onto the exit path far right. Follow this which reaches the managed area around the Flash. Look for the first junction. This has a path bearing off to the left.



22: SJ637986 Bear left at this junction. There are various paths around the Flash. Take any path that keeps you near the Flash, generally bearing left if in doubt. Follow the paths for over ½ mile. In due course, at a junction of paths & road, reaching a footbridge to the left leading back to the car park (if you parked there), and a small road bridge, also heading left.



23: SJ646988 Cross the road to the right of the little road bridge to walk with a stream on your left and immediately going under a large road bridge. After 65 yards a kissing gate & horse gate are reached.



24: SJ647989 Go through the gate and continue on the path. After 280 yards cross the concrete path over a stream to immediately find a path off to the left.



24: SJ649991 Turn left and after about 100 yards you are back at the Sports Centre area.



=== Alternative in Damp weather===

25: SJ632984 This alternative offers a normally dry country path route from Note 19 to Note 21. You walk 200 yds South on Sandy Lane to find a farm drive on the left.

26: SJ633982 Turn down the drive and after 180 yards the drive turns right in front of a house and there is a path on the left at the right hand side of a gate.



27: SJ634984 Follow this path for about 350 yards, passing the end of the possibly flooded path, through a gate across a driveway and then a path exiting beside the Flash in Sorrowcow farm. Note 21

